



The 13-second Bills mystery that won't end
Was Tyler Bass' kickoff a fluke, a missed signal or planned? | PAGE B1

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Brown addresses economic impact of mass shootings



Buffalo Mayor Byron Brown speaks at a congressional hearing Wednesday.

Tells hearing what city went through

By STEPHEN T. WATSON
NEWS STAFF REPORTER

Beyond the grim human toll of mass shootings that are becoming increasingly common in the United States, there's an economic cost as well.

Counties where a mass shooting took place saw a 1.8% decline in employment per capita, according to one study cited Tuesday at a congressional hearing in Washington attended by Buffalo Mayor Byron Brown. Another report found housing values fell by about 3%.

"This event has the potential to harm Buffalo's already economically disadvantaged Black community and further grow inequality," Brown said during his appearance before

a congressional panel, referring to the May 14 massacre at Tops Markets. "We must do whatever we can to combat this and provide East Buffalo, the East Buffalo community, with the funding for services such as counseling, educational enrichment and lost wages."

Brown made a plea for federal aid for Buffalo and other affected communities before the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, a panel of the House Financial Services Committee.

The subcommittee heard how high-profile acts of gun violence in schools, stores and other public spaces lead to reduced educational achievement, property values and business activity in the cities and towns where the shootings occur.

Brown was one of five people invited to speak to the subcommittee.

The hearing revealed new data on the long-lasting economic effects of mass shootings and gun violence, an issue in places such as Buffalo, where a white gunman is charged with killing 10 Black people in a racist attack at the Jefferson Avenue grocery store. A report released Tuesday by the advocacy group Everytown for Gun Safety put the annual cost of gun violence in this country at \$57 billion, much of that the estimated

See **Browns** on Page A7

Council approves redistricting map in quick, unanimous vote



Niagara District resident Ariel Berg-Riger of Our City Action Buffalo speaks after the Buffalo Common Council unanimously approved the district reapportionment plan and then left the chamber.

Speed of the action frustrates protesters

By DEIDRE WILLIAMS AND LEAH CLARK
NEWS STAFF REPORTERS

The outcome of Tuesday's vote approving redrawn Common Council district boundaries did not come as a surprise to opponents, but the speed at which it happened frustrated them. The Council meeting lasted only minutes.

Members of organizations opposing the new boundaries began to read a statement in unison, and afterward several took turns reading individual statements. But by that time, all nine Council members had left the chamber.

"Vote them out," those in the audience chanted as the lawmakers left. "We came to engage one last time, and they walked out," said India B.

The Common Council's proposed districts



Walton of Our City Action Buffalo, a coalition of residents and community groups that presented an alternative map that, among other features, would have created a new district called Elmwood-Allestown. "But guess what? In 2023 all seats are up for re-election."

It's not the first time Walton has suggested new faces on the Common Council. In June 2021, as she basked in her surprising primary win over Mayor Byron Brown, Walton put elected officeholders in City Hall on notice with her promise to "support the next generation of progressive candidates that are going to come into leadership."

"The exciting thing to me is that we have built the infrastructure with this campaign to be able to run School Board members, to be able to run Common Council seats, to really get progressive, forward-thinking people into these seats," she told The Buffalo

See **Council** on Page A7

CENTENNIAL PARK A GAME CHANGER



Construction of the Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Centennial Park will remake part of Buffalo's waterfront and modernize the current Lasalle Park. Story on Page C1

Eyeing baby boomers, senior housing shifts to deliver more options

By LINDA BAKER
NEW YORK TIMES

WASHINGTON - The pandemic crushed the senior housing market, cutting occupancy rates and stalling construction. Now, as the market begins an uneven rebound, developers are adapting to the coming wave of aging baby boomers with a new crop of living developments.

Specialized housing for older Americans has been around for decades. But shifting demographics are forcing the industry to diversify more rapidly across rates and services, yielding increasingly lavish residences for upper-income

Americans as well as a growing number of affordable housing models.

For example, Trillium, a high-rise under construction in Northern Virginia near Washington, features restaurants, a wellness spa, and other boutique-hotel-style amenities and finishes. And in the Boston area, Opus Newton, a more modest development, will rely on resident volunteers to help reduce costs.

Developers are also experimenting with nontraditional models. In Loveland, Colo., Kallimos Communities is planning a multigenerational development with a mix of housing types and services.

See **Housing** on Page A6

Town of Niagara gives final approval to \$550M Amazon warehouse project

By JONATHAN D. EPSTEIN
NEWS BUSINESS REPORTER

What a difference eight miles and a county line can make.

Two years after pulling the plug on a massive warehouse and distribution center on Grand Island because of fervent community opposition, Amazon.com found a much different reception in Niagara County, where leaders in the Town of Niagara not only welcomed the e-commerce giant but invited it in.

To be sure, Amazon still faced neighborhood pushback over traffic, noise, pollution and other concerns - just as it did

in Erie County. And it still had to make concessions and invest extra money as a result. Amazon representatives did not speak during the meeting, and would not comment afterward.

But the town and the county weren't about to let this fish get away. And on Tuesday night, they all but sealed the deal, as the Town Board unanimously gave final approval to the e-commerce retailing giant's plan to build a \$550 million facility on land adjacent to the Niagara Falls International Airport and the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station.

"I get the reasons why people living in the vicinity of this project would

be against it, but this body and this county need to look out for the greater good," said Niagara County Legislator Christopher Voccio. "This project will have an impact on all of Niagara County and probably the entire region."

The vote clears the way for the project to proceed, pending a green light from the Seattle-based company's board of directors to go ahead with the investment. The proposal already received zoning variances, site plan approval and environmental approval.

The company is still awaiting a decision. See **Amazon** on Page A7

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CONTINUED FROM THE COVER



The Buffalo Common Council unanimously approved the district reapportionment plan during a quick meeting in the Council chambers Tuesday.

Photos by Derek Gee/Buffalo News

Council members say maps keep community bonds

COUNCIL • from A1

News at the time. For that to happen in 2023, however, her candidates will have to run in districts put in place by the incumbents, barring a court challenge that upends the district boundaries unanimously approved Tuesday.

That's a possibility. "The process was illegal, not only procedurally," Walton said. "It was not transparent and maintains a very gerrymander and racist map. We are in the process of consulting with our attorneys and letting the courts decide."

While the city's redistricting process and product drew criticism from hundreds of residents organized by Our City Action Buffalo, Common Council President Darius G. Pridden defended the redrawn boundaries. "I think the Council has done everything legally to not only respect the law but its citizens," he said.

Our City Action Buffalo's alternative map would have eliminated the Fillmore District and split it between the Niagara District and its proposed Elmwood-Allen town district. The group says its boundaries would preserve planning neighborhoods and create a more racially equitable city.

Niagara Council Member David A. Rivera cited his dis-

trict's diversity and inclusivity in explaining his vote.

"Not only does the Council's map keep the Latino and Puerto Rican communities together, it has also considered other minority communities of interest such as the Karen and Somali communities that have called the Niagara District home for many years, while including parts of the Elmwood Village thereby reinforcing our diversity," he said in a statement.

The proposed map created by the Commission on Reapportionment, as well as the map edited by the Council, both ensured that the Niagara District was compact, as well as diverse," he said. "The Niagara District has historically been known for its diversity and inclusivity, encompassing both the upper and lower West Side, as well as parts of the Elmwood Village. I understand that there are some community members who supported other maps being proposed; however, while these other maps sought to bolster the voting power of certain minority groups, they failed to take into account other minority groups, further segregating the city by proposing districts that are less diverse."

"While their proposal slightly increased the percentage of Black of African American voters in one district, it created an entirely separate homogeneous district in an area that, over the



Buffalo Common Council President Rev. Darius Pridden hits his gavel to begin the meeting.

last 10-15 years, has seen tremendous investment," Rivera said. "It is my goal to ensure that for years to come, the Buffalo councilmanic districts are diverse and inclusive with respect to both racial makeup, as well as wealth."

The Council reviewed the group's alternative map even though it had not been submitted to the city's commission on reapportionment, Pridden said. If its map had been submitted to the commission, the commission could have included elements of the alternative map in its recommendation to the Council.

"There's always going to be somebody or some group that might not like the decision, but that's why the process is there

and unfortunately, the Council had to consider the commission's map," Pridden said.

The Council's amended version of the redrawn council boundaries developed by the city's reapportionment commission includes minor changes. All of the SUNY Buffalo State campus will be in the Delaware District, for instance, whereas in an earlier proposal a portion of the college would have been in the Delaware District and the rest in the Niagara District. And the Lovejoy District was modified to include all of the Valley neighborhood, which is bounded by the Buffalo River, Van Rensselaer Street and the 1190. The Valley neighborhood is currently split between South and Love-

joy districts.

Under the Council's amended map, the South District has the highest population of white people, with 24,089, followed by Delaware District with 22,323 and the Niagara District with 13,720. Niagara also has the highest Hispanic population: 8,286.

Masten, University and Elliott districts are home to the largest numbers of African Americans: 23,547; 18,970; and 17,950, respectively. Before the Council's special session Tuesday, members of Our City Action Buffalo and PUSH Buffalo gathered on the steps of City Hall. The leaders of the organizations told the crowd the chances of the Council rejecting the map were low. But their intentions were to still "shame the hell out of them," Walton said.

As they began practicing prepared written statements and chants, an enlivened mood could be felt throughout the crowd and continued into City Hall. However, when they entered the Council chambers on the 13th floor, their mood became somber, but determined.

The maps the Common Council have put forth do nothing to address our hyper-segregated communities, and, in fact, do harm by upholding a legacy of gerrymandering and inequity," according to the statement.

The next step is for the

mayor to hold a public hearing before taking action on the boundaries approved by the Council.

Masten Council Member Ulysees O. Wingo said he believes the newly approved map will stand up to any legal challenge.

"That's why the process was elongated so that it could stand up to any type of litigation or scrutiny," he said. "Everything was intentional. Everything was deliberate. How the map is, is how the map is."

"When you look at the map, Masten hasn't changed (much) so I have the same folks who voted me in to continue to represent," he said. "I am neither bothered or unbothered by the map. The law was followed, and I'm content. I got my same people."

"Obviously, there were people at the last meeting, people at the public hearing and people today that were displeased," said South Council Member Chris Scanlon. "You're never going to make everyone happy, there's always going to be people displeased with whatever action you take. I can tell that based on what I received in the form of phone calls, emails or conversations I've had throughout the city, there are many more people who have confidence in the maps that we ultimately approved today than there were people displeased with them."

Experts testify on the effects of gun violence on children and communities

BROWN • from A1

loss of quality of life for victims and their families. The annual cost in tax dollars is \$12.6 billion, or \$73.904 in short- and long-term effects for each gun death and \$25,150 for each non-fatal gun injury.

"No dollar amount could ever fully convey the cost for families and survivors of gun violence," said Sarah Burd-Sharps, Everytown's senior director of research. "But examining the serious economic consequences is essential, as well, for understanding just how extensive and expensive this crisis is."

Experts who testified Tuesday said children exposed to gun violence at school were less likely to graduate high school or college and more likely to experience mental health issues and earn less in their future careers.

Further, places where mass shootings occur see slower economic growth and a drop in property values, in part because notoriety surrounding the event made people hesitate to move into, shop in or work in that community.

"Mass shootings can have a de-

astating impact on communities," said Rep. Al Green, a Texas Democrat and chair of the subcommittee. "They hurt businesses, causing resignations, layoffs, litigation costs and increased cost of insurance. Property values decrease and the tax base erodes, leading to cuts in fire, police and sanitation departments."

Green noted that Buffalo city government, in just the first two weeks after the Tops shooting, spent \$500,000 on police and fire overtime and other services — unbudgeted expenses that only have grown since.

Beyond direct municipal expenses, the mass shooting also generated costs to rebuild, to heal and to provide counseling, Brown said.

"Gun violence has a lasting and negative impact on survivors," he said. "And experiencing these events in childhood has a lifelong impact on the psychological well being and labor market participation of those involved. The May 14 shooting in Buffalo will impact an entire generation of children."

This hate-fueled massacre also brought to the surface problems, such as an underinvestment in Black and brown communities, that affect cities across the country, Brown said.

That's why he called for federal investment in communities where mass shootings took place, as well as passage of federal legislation targeting anti-Black hate crimes and banning assault weapons.

Green praised the Buffalo Niagara Partnership for advocating for an assault weapons ban and urged more business groups to take a similar stand.

In addition to Brown and Burd-Sharps, the other panelists were Abel Brodeur, an economist at the University of Ottawa; Ruchi Singh, an assistant professor at the University of Georgia's Terry College of Business; and Brian Ingram, owner of a chain of restaurants in Minnesota.

Ingram was invited by Republicans on the subcommittee, who focused their remarks on the rise in violent crime since the beginning of the pandemic; an increase they blamed on "soft-on-crime" liberal prosecutors and Democrats who supported "defunding the police."

Brown, however, said he has increased the city's police budget and pointed to the proliferation of powerful weapons, often obtained illegally, that makes the job of Buffalo police officers more difficult.

Residents criticize board for decision, especially those living near the site

AMAZON • from A1

sion by the Niagara County Industrial Development Agency to grant \$124 million in tax breaks for the project, with a vote expected next month, but that's expected to be approved based on comments by agency board members earlier this month.

Residents still gave the board an earful before the vote, criticizing Amazon as bad for the community, and questioning the company's job and investment promises. Those living on Packard Road in particular — along the edge of the site — remained particularly angry at the board and Amazon.

"It's obvious that all of you sitting up here have no regard for the people on Packard Road at all whatsoever. You're forcing me to put my house up for sale, pick up my life and start all over again," said Robert Taylor, who said he built his own home on Packard nearly 30 years ago. "You really don't care, because it's all about the tax money. It's just a shame that you can stamp your

name to something that's going to be so detrimental to the town down the road."

But Supervisor Lee Wallace readily acknowledged the importance of finances in the town's considerations. The town does not raise enough money with its current property taxes to cover its spending, so it has to take money out of its fund balance each year.

And the pending closing of a landfill — and the end of an agreement that brings \$200,000 annually — adds to the problem, he added.

But the Amazon project would generate \$800,000 to \$1 million in additional tax revenue — a 35% increase over the town's current collection. The town is also negotiating a community benefits agreement with Amazon, which would cover infrastructure improvements and the impact of the project on police, fire and other public resources, as well as potential philanthropic support in the community.

"We have to make decisions based on what we think is right for our entire community," Wallace said.